

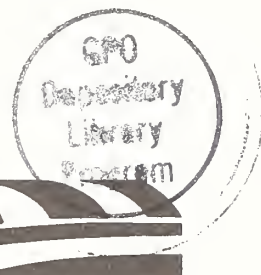
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# Farm Broadcasters Letter



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of Communications

Washington, DC 20250-1340

Letter No. 2653

March 11, 1994

**CROP INSURANCE REFORM** -- A proposal has been introduced to change the response of the Federal government to natural disasters in rural America. The Federal Crop Insurance Reform Act of 1995, announced by Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy, would offer as standard features coverage for delayed or prevented planting and a new basic catastrophic coverage for \$50 per crop per county, up to \$100 per farmer. The proposed legislation replaces crop loss disaster payments, ending the conflict between crop insurance and disaster relief bills, and would require all producers participating in farm programs to obtain coverage. The reforms would save an estimated \$750 million over a five-year period. Espy has also announced changes to improve the fiscal soundness of federal crop insurance. **Contact: Steve Kinsella (202) 720-4623.**

**OPTIONS PROJECT** -- A test project for farmer participation in the Options Contract program will be continued in 1994. Begun last year, producers in the pilot program may enroll corn, wheat and soybeans for alternative protection equivalent to the target price and price support loan levels. The test project is available to producers in three counties each in Illinois, Indiana, and Iowa, and two counties in Kansas and North Dakota. The project is designed to familiarize producers with income protection offered by contract options. **Contact: Bruce Merkle (202) 720-8206.**

**MEAT INSPECTION DISCUSSION** -- USDA will conduct an open forum on issues relative to the inspection system for meat and poultry plants. The Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) system is one of several initiatives USDA is undertaking to improve inspection and safety of the nation's meat and poultry supply. The forum will be held March 30-31 in Washington, D.C., and will include public health officials, representatives from the meat industry, consumer groups, scientists, professional organizations, government officials, farmers and producer groups. The sessions will be open to the public. **Contact: Mary Dixon (202) 720-4623.**

**HELPING ICE-DAMAGED REGIONS** -- USDA's Rural Electrification Administration is providing cash-flow assistance, technical support and information to the agency's electric power providers in the 94-county, ice-damaged areas of Mississippi and Tennessee. USDA's Food and Nutrition Service has provided \$6 million in benefits to nearly 30,000 Mississippi households to replace lost food, benefits, and commodities distributed by disaster-relief organizations. Trees and utility poles that were snapped by heavy ice turned the region into a disaster area. Considerable damage has been reported to the pecan crop. Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy sent Wally Beyer, administrator of USDA's Rural Electrification Administration, to the storm-damaged area to assess efforts in restoring power. **Contact: Eileen McMahon (202) 720-1363.**

Radio-TV (202) 720-4330

Radio-TV FAX (202) 690-2165

AgNewsFAX (202) 690-3944

**EXPORTS & IMPORTS** -- Agricultural exports this year are forecast to reach \$42 billion. The volume is expected to be down slightly, primarily because of weakening demand for U.S. coarse grain and soybean exports. The declines are partially offset by increased levels of wheat and cotton exports. Despite the lower export volume, higher prices have boosted export value. U.S. agricultural imports during fiscal year 1994 are forecast at \$24 billion. The projected U.S. agricultural trade surplus is expected to be \$18 billion. **Contact: Joel Greene (202) 219-0821.**

**NEW USES** -- Kenaf, the fibrous plant grown in the south for papermaking, is now being used as an inexpensive potting medium for nurseries and greenhouses. Researchers have found that a blend of 70 percent kenaf and 30 percent peat moss is an ideal mixture for young plants. Adding kenaf reduces production costs by replacing peat moss, which is an expensive import from Canada. Kenaf is a versatile plant. Its leaves are used in making cattle feed, its bark is used to make wallboards and high quality newsprint, and now the stems are used as a potting medium. **Contact: Yin Tung Wang (210) 968-5585.**

**SON OF NEW USES** -- Tobacco, considered by some scientists as one of the causes of cancer, may play a significant role in fighting that disease as well as other human ailments. Researchers at North Carolina State University have field tested strains of tobacco that harness the plant's energy for production of anti-cancer and anti-Aids drugs and other pharmaceutical compounds. Tobacco is readily amenable to genetic manipulation and is termed the white mouse of the plant world. It is ideal for producing large quantities of protein for making blood protein and drugs, and for such use can gross up to \$12,000 per acre. Gene transfer and the use of genetically altered viruses are two methods used to turn tobacco plants into chemical factories. **Contact: David Pace (606) 257-7272.**

**SOYBEAN SEED SUPPLY** -- Increased consumption and exports of soybeans, shrinking stocks and high prices are causing concern about a sufficient supply of certified soybean seeds for this year's crop in the southeast. The extent of seed shortage will depend on how many acres soybean farmers plant. With market prices hitting \$7 a bushel, and if the weather cooperates, farmers will likely want to boost their acreage. John Woodruff, a soybean specialist at the University of Georgia Extension Service, suggests securing needed varieties early. **Contact: John Woodruff (912) 386-3430.**

**AGRICULTURE WEEK** -- Both private and public organizations are observing National Agriculture Week, March 14-20. An example is the Science Museum of Virginia display of agricultural experiments and projects from an elementary school, and exhibits of art that has an agricultural theme. The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services prepared and distributed an information kit about events in the state during the week, and the value of agriculture in the state. **Contact: Elaine Lidholm (804) 371-8579.**

**HEALTHY WEIGHT** -- The saying goes that, 'You can't be too rich, or too thin.' The "thin" part is definitely a myth, says Carol Suter, nutrition specialist with the Texas Agricultural Extension Service. Carol says being too thin or too heavy increases the chances of developing health problems. The waist-to-hip ratio is a simple way to determine if your weight is a health risk. Measure your waist, and measure around the largest part of your hips. Divide the number of waist inches by those of the hips to obtain the risk ratio. High-risk for men is 0.95 or above. For women its 0.80 and above. **Contact: Carol Suter (409) 845-2798.**



## FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

### WEEKLY CASSETTE:

**AGRICULTURE USA #1918** -- A long series of devastating natural disasters in the preceding three years has policymakers looking for better ways to make sure farmers' businesses survive. **Lori Spiczka** reports on a new proposal for crop insurance. (Weekly reel -- 13-1/2 minute documentary.)

**CONSUMER TIME #1400** -- Exercise and breast feeding; termites!; home gardens - when to transplant; "convenience" gardens; time for turf. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 to 3 minute consumer features.)

**AGRITAPE FEATURES #1910** -- A five-part series on precision farming; details on 1994 farm program changes; tax info for farmers; a new farmworker protection standard. (Weekly reel of features.)

### USDA RADIO NEWSLINE:

Thursday, March 17, sugar & sweetener outlook; Friday, March 18, cattle on feed, ag outlook; Monday, March 21, ag chemical usage; Tuesday, March 22, crop & weather update, catfish processing; Wednesday, March 23, fruit outlook, livestock situation; Thursday, March 24, U.S. ag trade update. **These are the USDA reports we know about in advance. Our Newsline carries many stories every day which are not listed in this lineup. Please don't let the lack of a story listing keep you from calling.**

**USDA RADIO NEWSLINE (202) 488-8358 or 8359**

**COMREX ENCODED (202) 720-2545**

*Material changed at 5 p.m., EDT, each working day.*

## FROM OUR TELEVISION SERVICE

**FEATURES** -- **Patrick O'Leary** reports on "Precision Farming" in a special five-part series. Part 1 is an introduction to the subject; Part 2 covers the Global Positioning System satellites; Part 3 is about remote sensing; Part 4 covers Geographic Information Systems technology; Part 5 is on Variable Rate Technology. The reports can be aired in sequence or individually, and might fit your programming needs during National Agriculture Week, March 14-20. For a tape copy call (202) 720-7039.

*Available on Satellite Galaxy 4, channel 23, audio 6.2 or 6.8, downlink frequency 4160 MHz.: Thursdays from 7:30 - 7:45 p.m., EDT; Saturdays 10:00 a.m., EDT; Mondays 8:00 a.m., EDT.*

## OFFMIKE

**ITS BEEN THE HARDEST WINTER...**in memory, says **Robert Driscoll** (WTKA, Ann Arbor, MI). Frost has reached down 7 feet, moving foundations, cracking walls, and snapping water pipes. Listeners tell Bob that insurance doesn't cover damage resulting from such movement of the earth. Bob says a mid-March vote is scheduled in the Michigan legislature regarding funding for education. There has been a major effort to keep ag production land from being taxed at higher commercial rates. Bob has been producing special programs on the issue for his listeners.

**THANKS...**to **Larry DeSha** (KGNC, Amarillo, TX) for stopping by while covering a hometown delegation of the American Agriculture Movement visiting government leaders in Washington, D.C. While in USDA's radio studios Larry met chief meteorologist **Norton Strommen** and quickly arranged a live broadcast interview for his listeners back home. Larry noted that dryness has settled over Texas, there has been little rainfall for the past 60 days. Norton says he sees little relief in the next 90 days.

## *Farm Broadcasters Letter*



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Room 528A  
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**UPDATE...**on the station's progress in moving across town is provided by **Kim Dlouhy** (WOW, Omaha, NE). A few months back Kim told us about ground breaking ceremonies for new facilities. The move into the new building begins the middle of this month. Kim and her farm department staff are looking forward to working with the new all digital audio production equipment.

**CHANGE...**is underway at USDA Radio & TV. Broadcaster comments are guiding improvements in programming. Format and content changes have been made in our weekly radio cassette service, and other improvements are planned to better meet the variety of farm broadcast formats. **Larry Quinn**, now heading USDA's radio and TV team, is developing a new Video, Teleconference and Radio Center in USDA's south building. A new radio studio will use digital technology. We welcome suggestions and comments. Contact Larry at (202) 720-4330, FAX (202) 720-5773, or write Chief, VTR Center 1618-S, OPA, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250.

**VIC POWELL**  
Office of Communications